

Exhibit No. 8

**Meeting the individualized needs of Montana's "High-risk children with multiagency service needs through the development of a Residentially-Based Wraparound Services**

Date 3-26-09Bill No. HB 2

Montana has the opportunity to effectively transition many very seriously disturbed children from group homes and psychiatric residential treatment facilities into a "permanent home" with a permanent family.

This effort would be built upon the Montana Children's System of Care Initiative, but building a sustainably funded community and family based "permanency" wraparound initiative requires that the state and community agencies charged by Montana statute to "protect," "treat," "correct," and "educate" **Severely Emotionally Disturbed Children actively participate and invest in developing a "sustainable, outcome oriented, and cost-effective children's system of care.**

Most other states have learned that "sustaining" systems of care initiatives requires blending and reallocating federal title IV-E, and Medicaid EPSTD funds, along with the state general fund "family preservation" and juvenile justice placement funds.

Montana can build upon the successful experiences of other states that have transitioned some group homes from a structured, often long-term living environment for children who have experienced multiple failed placements in foster family homes, to an intensive short-term intervention tasked with returning children to their own homes or to another permanent and stable family setting in as short a time possible.

Many of Montana's providers of residential care and treatment are very interested in developing a "partnership" with the Department to begin building a **cost and outcome effective System of Care.** This would represent a significant "infrastructure" investment in children and youth that presently utilize an inordinate percentage of Montana's placement and treatment resources.

The program with which I worked in California for 4 years achieved a **92% successful graduation rate** working with the most severely emotionally disturbed children and their families.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin estimated that, without having re-designed its system and re-directed dollars, child welfare spending on residential treatment would have increased from \$18m in 1996 to \$43m today; instead, Milwaukee is spending less on residential treatment today than in 1996, and serving more children.

We are being asked and challenged by our President and our Governor to develop new approaches toward solving old problems. This proposal embraces the most promising evidence based practices for **achieving durable treatment outcomes in a cost-effective manner.**

Respectfully Submitted,

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